THE BI-MONTHLY

Newsletter of the Bisexual Center

Volume 9, Number 3 **$1.50** May/June 1985

about aids

by Maggi Rubenstein

As you may know, I have been actively involved in MOBILIZATION AGAINST AIDS, and am currently serving as co-chair of both the National Steering Committe and the Media Committee. I wanted readers of The Bi-Monthly to be aware of decisions made at a recent MOBILIZATION Conference. The following is from recent press releases from MOBILIZATION. I urge bisexual men and women to join with our brothers and sisters in the fight against AIDS in whatever way works for them, be it personal or political.

I would also like to mention a recent conference in which I participated as a speaker. Organized by the Gay/Lesbian : Health Care Coordinating Committee of the City and County of San Francisco, it ran the afternoon of April 18th, and attempted to cover the health care needs of lesbians and bi women (both medical and psychological health) in a training seminar for health care professionals. April 27th was another conference, "Heterosexual Behavior and AIDS," put together by Seth Prosterman, Margo Rila, Clark Taylor, myself and the Sexologists Sexual Health Project. More on both conferences in the next issue.

MOBILIZATION AGAINST AIDS, in its just-concluded Founding Conference, has adopted specific strategies for nation-wide work against the currently insufficient war-effort against AIDS. Over 150 people attended the conference, which ran March 29-31, and formulated a plan of action which includes:

* A National Petition Drive, to gather more than 100,000 signatures urging Congress and the President to act more effectively in the fight against AIDS is now underway. The collected petitions will be delivered in Washington D.C. by a delegation of People With AIDS.

* A Memorial Day Vigil has been organized by MOBILIZATION across the United States and in Canada to remember and honor the thousands who have died from AIDS. The candlelight vigil will take place in Boston, Dallas, Houston, Denver, Columbus, Minneapolis, Los Angeles, Oklahoma City, Detroit, Chicago, Seattle, Milwaukee, Long Beach, Jackson (MS), Portland, San Diego, San Francisco and Toronto (Canada) during the early evening in each city on May 27th. People With AIDS are expected to take a major role in this vigil.

Concerning the Candlelight Vigil, MOBILIZATION's People With AIDS' Caucus Chair, Dean Sandmire, reports "The response has been fantastic from all around the country. Everyone I've spoken to supports the Vigil. In many cities the organization seems to be spontaneous. The people, at a grass-roots level, are much more conscientious of the impact of AIDS than is generally believed."

* Later this year, MOBILIZATION plans a mass demonstration in at least two cities, Washington D.C. and San Francisco. People With AIDS will play a considerable part in this demonstration.

The war-effort against AIDS is seen as a two-pronged effort: 1) better, more effective management of the health-research, preventative-education and patient-service efforts, and 2) scrupulous guarding of the civil rights of People With AIDS or ARC (AIDS-Related Conditions) and people in high-risk categories for contracting AIDS.

In the health area, the Conference called for a) more cooperation among researchers in the United States and among those in foreign countries, b) independent review of research and funding, with a person with AIDS on such a review committee, c) a $20 million appropriation for a national education campaign to educate both the general public and high-risk groups about AIDS, and d) the use of animals rather than patients with AIDS for research, as some have been made to feel like expendable guinea pigs by current research practices.

In the civil rights area, the consensus was to resist quarantine or internment of either people with AIDS or those in high-risk categories. In addition, the Conference voted to oppose any discrimination in housing or employment based on such status.

The Conference ended by formalizing the existence of MOBILIZATION and by electing the beginning National Steering Committee of 27 members. Shortly after the conference, MOBILIZATION opened its National Office at 335 Noe Street in San Francisco.

MOBILIZATION AGAINST AIDS is a membership organization with annual dues of $25 (or $12.50 for low-income members) and spe-

cial annual dues of $5 for People With AIDS or ARC (or $1 for low-income members). MOBILIZATION receives no Government funding of any kind, and is self-supporting, existing on contributions of people who want a better response to the AIDS epidemic than heretofore provided by the Government. If you would like to find out more or help, contact MOBILIZATION at 335 Noe St., San Francisco CA 94114 or phone 415 431-4660.

WONDERING WHAT YOU CAN DO ABOUT AIDS? THE FOLLOWING IS A BRIEF LIST OF JUST A FEW OF THE PROJECTS THAT YOU CAN GET INVOLVED IN. ALL IT TAKES IS A PHONE CALL TO FIND OUT WHAT YOU CAN DO.

Rita Rocket is a woman who has been going to San Francisco General Hospital's Ward 5-B every other Sunday for over a year now. She provides home-cooked meals, energy and a boost in morale for patients with AIDS. Give her a call at 415 821-6069 and make a pledge of your time and/or your money!

The STOP AIDS PROJECT is winding down May 15th, but if you can fit it in in the next two weeks, it's worth considering. For men only, it involves small group discussions of 10-12 (held in homes of volunteer hosts in San Francisco) on safe sex, adjusting lifestyles, coping with the AIDS epidemic, and keeping healthy physically and psychologically in this stressful time. Space is limited. Call 392-0368 for a reservation--it's only one evening of your time!

You can also donate your time, funds or various goods for people with AIDS to any of the organizations working so hard in the Bay Area. The S.F. AIDS FOUNDATION's phone number is 415 863-AIDS (or try their toll-free number for northern California, 800-FOR-AIDS). The SHANTI PROJECT (phone number 415 558-9644) can use volunteers for counseling, contributions for their thrift shop, cash donations, etc. The PACIFIC CENTER--EAST BAY AIDS PROJECT provides emotional and practical support, social service assistance, education, etc. Call 415 548-8283 to find out how you can help.

BOARD MEETINGS

The Bi Center Board of Directors' next 2 meetings will be May 13th and June 10th at 7:30 p.m., at Steven Brown's and Becca Thomas' homes, respectively. Members welcome.

groups

PACIFIC CENTER RAP GROUPS

A group for bisexual men and women is held every Sunday night from 7 to 9 p.m. at the Pacific Center at 2712 Telegraph Ave. in Berkeley. For more information, call Nate Brown at 235-7179, or phone 482-2819 and ask for Don Honor.

A bi women's rap group is held Wednesdays; call the Center at 841-5224 for details.

The Wednesday night Married Gay and Bisexual Men's Group has recently developed a subgroup also meeting Wednesdays 8-10 for men dealing with same-sex feelings but also committed to their long-term heterosexual relationships. Call the Pacific Center at 841-5224 for details.

The 3rd Monday of every month, a Bisexual Outreach meeting is held at the Pacific Center to plan bi programming. All are welcome.

MARRIED BI WOMEN'S GROUP

A group of married bisexual women has been meeting regularly for about a year, usually once a month. Meetings are held in women's homes, rotating between the East Bay and San Francisco. If interested, contact Juliet at 566-7567.

WOMEN AND AIDS STUDY

The A.W.A.R.E. Project in San Francisco needs women to participate in a study of the prevalence of AIDS-related virus antibodies in sexually active women. The study involves an interview and a blood test; confidentiality is guaranteed and you can get the result of your antibody blood test.

A.W.A.R.E. is looking for women who have had sex in the last 3 years with (1) 5 or more men, or (2) one or more men in high-risk groups (men who have had sex with other men, I.V. drug users, hemophiliacs, or men with AIDS), and who live in or have most of their sexual contacts in San Francisco. To participate, call 821-8695; Tuesdays 8 to noon and Fridays 1:30 to 3:30 someone is available to talk to callers. Otherwise leave a message on the machine and someone will return your call.

BI CENTER PHONE

Our answering machine is finally taking messages, so feel free to call us at 415 431-4431.

BiphoBic:

"SOME OF MY BEST FRIENDS ARE"

by Lani Kaahumanu

[Reprinted with permission of the author from the June 1982 issue of Plexus.]

One of the biggest "jokes" of the lesbian/gay parade every year was observing the bisexual contingent. As far as I was concerned they were a bunch of closet cases, not deserving of serious consideration. As a lesbian, I felt superior in some ways and was embarassed for them. How naive to take the bisexual "stage" seriously. I was sure they would get over it and "come out" when they let go of the very real heterosexual privilege they were obviously clinging to. Why else would anyone say they were bisexual?

This deep rooted contempt and ignorance of bisexuality are common in the lesbian community. It is these attitudes that kept me closeted. Whether marked "hetero" or "homo," closets feel the same in that they perpetuate the experience of isolation, fear of discovery/loss, alienation, self doubt; the list goes on and on and is all too familiar to those closeted. It is important for me as a lesbian-identified bisexual woman, who is politically dedicated to and active in the Women's Movement, to discuss bisexuality as a valid lifestyle, and to challenge the prejudices. I know I am not having an isolated experience. I have triggered many "lesbians" to blurt out in whispered confidence, "I have a man in the closet. You are very brave." I don't think it's bravery that pushes me to explore. I'm a survivor; being outside of the acceptable behavior of my community is not new to me.

Since enforced heterosexuality affects us in ways we are still discovering/recovering from, I want to discuss the validity of the idea of stages, and the fact that for my sexuality, lesbianism was a stage. Now this could be taken as a rather shocking, politically incorrect and unsisterly statement. It is not meant as such. I am not denying lesbian existence by expressing my sexual attraction for certain women and men. It doesn't make me wishy washy, confused, untrustworthy, or more sexually liberated. It makes me a bisexual.

The polarized heterosexist "norm" and --to a lesser degree--the homosexist "norm" sees bisexuality exclusively as a phase from one to the other and perhaps back again, invalidating it as a way to be, a chosen sexuality per se. However, if we take a closer look, we see that for most lesbian and gay men bisexuality is a stage. And for most lesbians, bisexuals and gay men heterosexuality is a stage. So no matter where you end up it is the USE of the word "stage" as a one-up attitude that hurts everyone of us.

The categories, stereotypes, labels, etc., are part and parcel of the patriarchal mind-set that puts us in boxes and keeps us in our places. For me it glaringly denies my woman-loving-woman experiences as a bisexual. The political reality is non-existent. When we make some people invisible, and make others more politically correct, we are forming new or maintaining the old hierarchies. This is a path studded with old patterns in new drag. I think the political community is going to politically correct itself to death. There is no politically correct sexual preference. As we recover from the post-Freudian mind/binds, we have to see the sexual revolution in feminist terms. We are in the early stages of establishing a feminist theory of female sexuality. If there were a pre-existing feminist foundation, our differences would not divide us so profoundly.

I came to lesbianism long before my sexuality was clear to me. I lived an open lesbian lifestyle for four years. I cannot deny the importance of this experience, nor do I want to. For me lesbian identity is more than and/or in addition to sexuality; it is a political awareness which bisexuality doesn't alter or detract from. Seven and a half years ago when I left my husband and the fulltime role of motherhood, it didn't make me less conscious of what being a mother means. In fact, it gave me a deeper understanding. I am still a mother. That experience cannot be taken away from me. In much the same way, my lesbian awareness isn't lost now that I claim bisexuality. When I realized my woman-loving-woman feelings, and came out as a lesbian, I had no heterosexual privilege; yet there were important males in my life--including a son. I'm getting in touch with my bisexuality because it's real for me, not in order to acquire or flaunt the privilege

that is inherent in being with men. I enjoy and honor women-only space. And I don't attend lesbian events since I am not a lesbian. My political consciousness is lesbian, but my lifestyle is bisexual.

I have been trashed by some lesbians for this lifestyle. I arouse anger, disappointment, and embarassment because it feeds the myth that lesbians don't exist. It's as if I'm betraying the cause by going "back" to men. It has been very scary and sometimes painful to come out as a bisexual. I know from the experience of leaving my young daughter and son what it's like being the target of trashing. It isn't easy to be the center of gossip, to feel it thick in the air; everyone knows, no one asks, but the unconscious or calculated rudeness speaks for itself. I have shocked and unnerved many friends. Unfortunately, I lost some of them. Through all this I have learned to trust myself and do what is necessary. We have to deal with women's oppression of other women in a constructive way or we will be factionalized forever. We have to see the whole and the part we play in it. All men are not the enemy, just as all women are not my allies. Forming family communities with people who share your sexual identity is important, but trashing is non-productive. The sexual choices we make are equally valid for our individual experiences. I understand the significance and the necessity for separatism as a way to be, and I don't have to agree with it or live it out in order to respect it. I trust that we are all doing what we need to do.

In this short article, it is impossible to cover all that needs to be discussed and clarified about the role/context of bisexuality in the women's community. Other issues must be addressed, including bisexual women who choose to relate to women only, serial monogamy/nonmonogamy, bisexual myths, cultural, race and class differences, bisexual chauvinism, and the joys of bisexuality--to name a few.

I can only hope that this will be one voice in the beginning of an ongoing exploration to create a broader based feminist sexual theory. I urge bisexual women to take a political stand, and to become a visible/viable energy force in the Women's Movement. It is important to open this dialogue in the community. Nobody belongs in the closet. We need to hear from all women.

[You will be reading more by Lani Kaahumanu in the forthcoming Lesbian/Gay Freedom Day Parade program, where she will have another article addressing the issues of bisexuals and the lesbian/gay communities.--Editor]

A MESSAGE FROM THE PRESIDENT

Friends, as a member of the Lesbian/Gay Freedom Day Committee, I have found a number of people approaching me to ask why there will be no bisexual speaker at this year's celebration. After all, they point out, Maggi Rubenstein spoke at last year's Parade, and we (as bisexuals) have been a group mentioned much more often by the media.

I could give a couple of "easy" explanations: the Parade Committee has cut down the number of speakers this year, and the emphasis this year is on getting national figures to address the Parade crowds rather than local speakers. But the truth also involves a matter for which we share responsibility. As a community affiliated with the Lesbian/Gay communities, we are not a visible, united nor vocal presence. I submitted several names of possible bi speakers without success, as those deciding "saw no need."

Well, there is a need! We still face discrimination, and our very own existence is still questioned. If our movement is to survive, we must unite and be vocal about our needs. I would like to urge all bisexual people to unite this year and march as a large and powerful contingent in this year's Parade. One person can make a difference and everyone has something to contribute.

I will have a meeting in my home to organize a marching contingent; if there is energy, we could also set up a Bi Center booth. Join me Sunday, May 12th, 7:00 p.m. at 846-14th St., San Francisco. If you have questions, would like more information, or wish to help but cannot attend the meeting, call me at 415 626-4352. We need to move fast--May 15th is the deadline for submitting applications to the Committee for a booth or marching position in the Parade!

Autumn Courtney

events

RITES OF SPRING

Join us on Saturday, May 4th, at 1201 14th Avenue #302, where Barbara and Judy will be hosting a Bi Center party. We'll provide warmth, good company and good cheer after 8 p.m.; please bring your choice of refreshments and a $2 donation.

PARADE!!!

Remember the Lesbian/Gay (and Bisexual!) Freedom Day Parade on Sunday, June 30th. Planning for a Bi Center contingent will be Sunday, May 12th at 7:00 p.m. at Autumn Courtney's home, 846-14th Street, San Francisco. Your help is needed is we are to be a presence at the Parade!

(Also, that same weekend, June 29th and 30th, is when the Polk Street Fair will be held--on Polk between Jackson and Bush, from 10 a.m. to 6 p.m.)

LITERATURE ON BISEXUALITY

The Journal of Homosexuality has been publishing a good deal more scholarly work on the subject of bisexuality. Last year, a special double issue (Vol. 9, Nos. 2/3) came out entitled "Bisexual and Homosexual Identities: Critical Theoretical Issues." It is being published as a hardcover book as well. The latest issue of the JOH continues with "Controversy Over the Bisexual and Homosexual Identities: Commentaries and Reactions" (Vol. 10, Nos. 3/4). This summer a special issue devoted solely to bisexuality will appear, guest edited by Fred (Fritz) Klein (author of The Bisexual Option) and Timothy Wolf. If interested in purchasing a copy of any of these issues, contact The Haworth Press, 53 Main Street, Binghamton NY 13905 (phone: 607 722-5857.)

Maggie

MARGUERITE RUBENSTEIN, Ph.D., A.C.S.
Sexologist
Licensed Marriage and Family Counselor
#MM 8794

928-1133 584-0172

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Advertising space in The Bi-Monthly is now available to members at $1.00 per 42-letter line, or $5.00 per business card. Sorry, no "personals"—but you can advertise if trying to form a bi group for a particular interest or activity.

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P.O. BOX 421924
SAN FRANCISCO, CA 94124-1924
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EDITOR: Jay Paul
ASST. EDITOR: Nate Brown
Production: Jay Paul
Addressing: Becca Thomas
Mailing: Nate Brown, Judy Gaer

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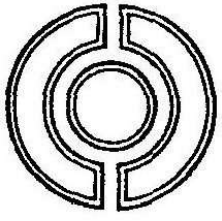

P.O. Box 421924
San Francisco, CA 94124-1924

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